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28 August 1962

MEMORANDUM FOR: Deputy Director/Intelligence

SUBJECT: The NIS Program

1. The purpose of this paper is to examine the NIS program in terms of format, requirements, and production capabilities, and to determine where we should go from here for optimum results. The enclosure provides a general background of NIS developments from the inception of the program in 1948 to the present.

Format

2. The format of the NIS was developed along traditional lines and in conformity with well-established and understood basic intelligence practices and terminology. Since a major purpose of the NIS is to support the national security in war, an exhaustive examination was made of the principal US wartime program, the Joint Army and Navy Intelligence Study (JANIS). All departments, agencies and military commands were questioned regarding the strengths and weaknesses of JANIS.

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3. [REDACTED] the US programs have been modified in the light of postwar developments but retain their fundamental character. The NIS Committee, the Departments of State and Defense, the Joint Staff, and the services have queried in detail their principal users respecting the structure of the NIS program. Although NIS users have criticized constructively and otherwise various aspects of the program, none has ever commented except favorably on the NIS format.

4. The NIS format may appear complex yet it is as simple and flexible as worldwide basic intelligence collection and production permit. A truly simple format would, in fact, be quite rigid, because of its monolithic structure, and would be incapable of the innumerable combinations of topical coverage required for production and use with respect to the variety of areal situations ranging from the primitive state to world powers. Fundamental in the development of the NIS format is the requirement to fully meet the expansion for wartime needs without major change or dislocations.

Requirements

5. The NIS is not a world encyclopedia of knowledge. Its requirements are selective and directly support and are responsive to national security needs. These requirements must also serve a wide range of purposes from the highest levels of policy and planning to operational needs.

6. In consequence, the manner in which the NIS is used and the amount of detail desired is subject to wide latitude, which is provided by NIS units at three levels of detail within the integrated survey: 1) a general summary; 2) standard detailed treatment under eight chapters; and 3) extended detail for certain subjects in supplements.

7. These levels of detail provide a flexible range of treatment suited to the wide variety of foreign country situations and further provide for expanding requirements as a country develops, without redoing work already accomplished. Moreover, this flexibility provides a balanced work load in terms of production capabilities and ensures optimum coverage, consisting of the general summary and such detailed treatment as priorities require and capabilities permit.

Production Capabilities

8. The initial terms of reference for the NIS program directed the production and continuous maintenance of basic intelligence, as set forth in the NIS Standard Instructions, on all foreign countries and areas of the world. The production capabilities required for this task were determined to be at a level which would provide for the production of complete NIS on 15 areas, or their equivalent, each year. This would have completed initial worldwide coverage in about 5 to 7 years and maintained it on a continuing basis at the same rate. When the actual production capabilities turned out to be about half those required, a policy decision was made to complete initial worldwide detailed coverage with existing capabilities at the correspondingly lower rate in order to provide a reservoir of

on-hand basic intelligence in event of war anywhere. Concurrently, it was decided to direct field collection worldwide on gaps and deficiencies revealed by this basic research and analysis, so that the necessary information would be available in the producing agencies files to quickly update any NIS units.

9. Today the NIS program has essentially completed worldwide detailed coverage and has revised about one-third of it. Continuing worldwide collection has provided much later information in the files of the producing agencies as a basis for a comprehensive maintenance program. However, with initial world coverage completed it is most feasible to concentrate existing production capabilities on priority topics and areas while continuing field collection worldwide so that the files on all areas may be maintained in emergency readiness. An important and necessary aspect is the greatly accelerated production and maintenance of the general summary chapters on all priority areas to provide the focus for selective detailed maintenance.

10. The essential problem of the NIS program throughout its fourteen years of operations has been to bridge the gap between requirements and capabilities. Both the producing agencies and the users have confirmed the validity of the NIS requirements for policy formulation, for planning, and for operations. A major deterrent to the development of an efficient production organization has been the ungainly and dispersed staffing complex of the Community. Some 40 different components have been involved in NIS production, directed through a variety of echelons and control points. Consistent diversion of these staffs to more immediate requirements than basic intelligence was the normal pattern. With the centralized control by CIA and DIA of the new integrated staffs the way is clear at long last to efficient and proper production performance.

What needs to be done now

11. In order to determine what changes are needed in the NIS program for optimum results, it is necessary to analyze its present shortcomings. The overriding one, based on experience and detailed replies over the past eight years from NIS users, is that the rate of NIS production is inadequate. The most recent survey of NIS users in the military establishment and overseas commands, conducted last year by the Joint Staff, puts it in these terms:

"Although the survey indicates that there is general satisfaction with the scope, format, and basic concept of the NIS and that the program should be continued, comments on the inadequacies of the NIS pointed almost exclusively to lack of initial coverage and need for more timely maintenance."

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12. By dint of certain favorable circumstances it is now feasible for the first time to meet this problem head on. These circumstances are: 1) the essential completion of initial NIS coverage worldwide; 2) the realignments of CIA's and DIA's NIS staffs to permit integrated control and production; and 3) development of procedures to provide for accelerated maintenance. These should provide a 25% increase in NIS production at present budgetary and manpower levels. Concurrently, and backstopped by initial NIS worldwide, detailed NIS coverage can now be concentrated in priority topics and areas, thereby reducing production requirements by some 30%. These steps will provide for adequate maintenance on the long range basis.

13. Another problem that is being looked into is the time differential among related NIS units on political intelligence. The Research Division, OBI has already taken steps to produce consolidated NIS units, comprising all political intelligence requirements for an area under the same date line. The publication of a consolidated NIS unit not only retires a sizeable number of disparate NIS units but also provides a more manageable and efficient unit for subsequent revision.

14. Modification of this system may be suitable for production of sociological and economic intelligence, although the number of separate staffs involved and the topical relationships do not readily lend themselves so well to this method. Certain consolidations are being explored in the Military Geography and Transportation portions of the NIS. The Scientific and Armed Forces units are already being produced in this manner.

15. It does not appear to be either necessary or prudent to go beyond the present measures at this time. The format and requirements have been and will continue to be modified as necessary. To change the nomenclature of the NIS would seem to little purpose inasmuch as the present system is well understood and has been tested by more than 14 years' use. The steps being taken will provide, with the present manpower input, the production of essential basic intelligence on all areas of the world to the depth of detail germane to the subject and required by the majority of users, and with a high degree of timeliness. To reach this goal will take time. More than that, however, it will take constant support and direction of effort, and a freedom from unproductive diversions.

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Assistant Director
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Enclosure: Background on NIS developments 1948-62